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INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The city of North Adams is responsible for a network of built infrastructure which includes roads, streets and bridges, wastewater, water, and stormwater. The City is also responsible for a number of services, including schools and education, law enforcement, fire and emergency, and solid waste. Aged infrastructure has been noted to be an issue, as has the condition of some public facilities. As the population of North Adams has declined over time, so has its tax base and municipal revenue. This creates a challenging scenario in the city – it faces needed infrastructural repair or replacement but faces limited fiscal resources. Long term planning for adaptive planning and investment in city infrastructure will ensure that the needs of existing residents, businesses and institutions are met while continuing to promote North Adams as a great place to be. North Adams is in a position to adapt practices to further its fiscal and environmental sustainability: it has expressed interest in an enterprise fund for infrastructure and services, and is pursuing municipal solar projects, while also possessing potential for wind and hydro power within the city. Through public workshops, increased investment in traffic calming, street and sidewalk maintenance/repair, snow removal and residential solar programs were identified as infrastructure and service priorities. It is important for the city of North Adams to consider the impacts of climate change when planning new or enhancing existing infrastructure, and to plan city services to address predicted trends such as more high heat days. Goals, policies and strategies are categorized in the following groups:

- *General Infrastructure and Services Recommendations*
- *Energy*
- *Water and Sewer*
- *Roads and Bridges*
- *Schools and Education*
- *Public Safety*
- *Technology*



Related Maps

Map 9: Slope and Drainage

Map 10: Solar Energy Potential

Map 11: Wind and Hydroelectric Potential

Map 12: Water Resources

Map 13: Infrastructure

Map 14: Transportation

Map 15: Community Facilities

Located in Appendix C

GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

GOAL IS 1: ENSURE THAT LONG-TERM PLANNING INITIATIVES INCLUDE THE MAINTENANCE, OPERATION AND EVENTUAL REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy IS 1.1: Engage in proactive asset management programs in all aspects of infrastructure planning including both new development and routine maintenance.

Action A: Adopt a Capital Improvement Plan and Community Facilities Plan

In 2011, Tighe and Bond prepared a Capital Improvement Plan for the drinking water system in North Adams. The City should build upon this effort to incorporate other departments and services. By engaging multiple departments, the City will be able to identify tandem efforts, such as street or road improvements that could incorporate water or sewer line improvements or replacement. The City has identified a Capital Improvement Plan in their 2014 CDBG grant, and would hire an outside consultant to assist in drafting the plan and ensuring its correspondence with the North Adams Vision 2030 Plan.

Action B: Encourage a Proactive Asset Management Regime in All City Departments

Encourage all departments to conduct annual updates of facilities, vehicles or properties within their jurisdiction and link to potential funding sources.

Action C: Expand Use of User Fees

Understand the true cost of services and adjust user fees to more fully cover true costs of services to support long-term fiscal health of the City. The City already has water and sewer fees, but could explore expanding this model to other services.

Action D: Track Infrastructure in GIS

Continue to pursue the City's capacity and use of GIS tools in the collection, visualization and analysis of data. This would be helpful in the Capital Improvement Plan, and was also noted as a specific need for the drinking water system.

Action E: Municipal Services Efficiency

Seek to consolidate and digitize municipal services and functions where practical – such as online permitting.

Action F: Plan to Maintain and Develop Services to Enhance North Adams' Competitiveness

Ensure that areas of the city identified as priority locations for new businesses are well served in terms of infrastructure, including high-speed internet, as well as water and sewer connection to the industrial park.

Capital Improvement Plan

1. Draft and adopt a CIP bylaw
2. Form a CIP committee or advisory council
3. Conduct an inventory of current facilities and conditions
4. Survey status of previously approved projects
5. Prepare financial analysis
6. Receive departmental requests
7. Review and rank projects in committee or advisory council
8. Draft long term schedule and funding mechanisms
9. Review in-house: with City Council and Finance Committee and Mayor
10. Incorporate priority projects into budget
11. Public notification
12. City approval

Enterprise Funds

Enterprise funds allow departmental services to fund themselves by identifying a total service cost and revenue to fund these costs. It also retains investment income and surplus for specific use. An enterprise fund adopted by a governing entity can be used for a public utility, healthcare, recreation or transportation facilities. North Adams has identified interest in setting up a water system enterprise fund. Revenue includes user charges and fees, state funding or grants, as well as bond anticipation and investment income. These funds are only usable by the enterprise fund. The City can terminate the fund after three years. Communities such as Pittsfield and Ware have adopted enterprise funds.

Policy IS 1.2: Prioritize economic self sufficiency at the department level – where feasible, encourage the adoption of an enterprise fund and departments to engage in revenue generating strategies.

Action A: Establish Dedicated Maintenance and Replacement Accounts for Infrastructure Projects

Create dedicated accounts for infrastructure projects to make accounting more transparent and organized.

Action B: Consider Enterprise Funds for Public Utilities, Recreation or Transportation

The 2011 Tighe and Bond Drinking Water Capital Improvement Plan, in conjunction with external audits and a report by the MA Department of Revenue, note that an enterprise fund accounting system should be used to support maintenance and repairs of the North Adams water system. Other areas where enterprise funding has been considered includes the sewer system, Windsor Lake, and Harriman West Airport.

Policy IS 1.3: Explore new opportunities for shared services and/or regionalization to reduce costs and create efficiencies.

Action A: Group Purchasing

Continue to lead or participate in the regional group purchasing program with a focus on cost savings but also greening city operations through non-toxic cleaning alternatives and recycled content paper products.

Action B: On-line Permitting

Continue to engage in the multi-town online permitting program. This includes online application for building permits, burn permits and health inspections. Communities which have participated have reported cost savings.

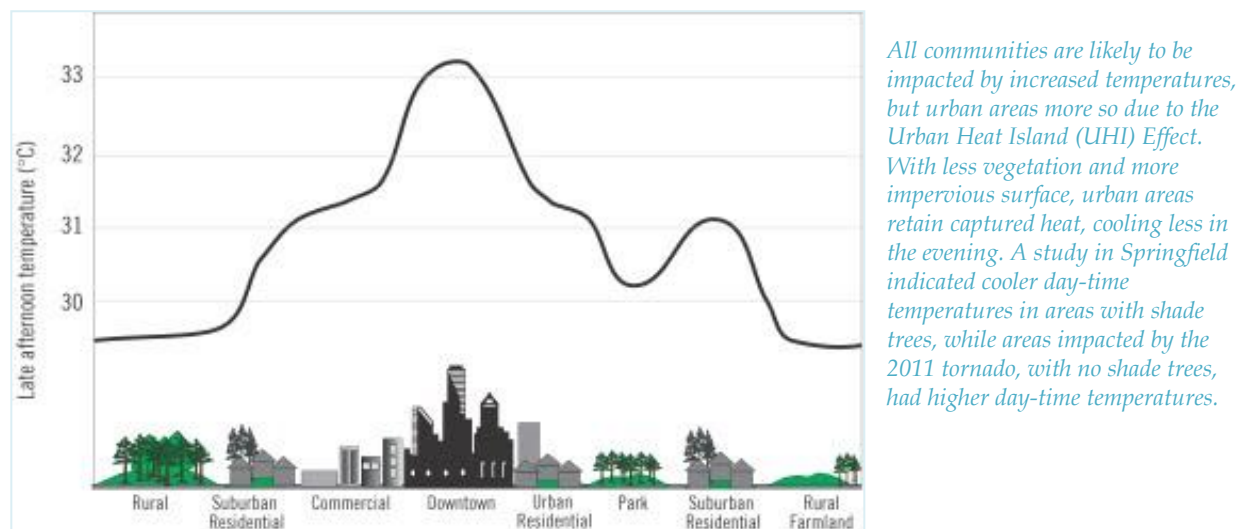
Action C: Continuously Pursue Service Delivery Efficiency

Conduct feasibility studies to share or consolidate other services. The City has identified interest in sharing or regionalizing a recycling facility, an animal control officer, lock-up, dispatch, information technology and IT disaster recovery, and tourism and marketing director.

GOAL IS 2: BUILD CLIMATE RESILIENCE INTO THE PLANNING AND MAINTENANCE OF MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SPACES

Policy IS 2.1: Integrate planning for increased temperatures into North Adams planning practice

Figure 11: Urban Heat Island Effect by Development Type



Source: US EPA, Urban Natural Resource Institute

Action A: Offer Shade and Drinking Water in Public Spaces

An anticipated climate impact in the Northeast is warmer weather, specifically an increase in the number of high heat days. Developed areas with ample impervious surface such as asphalt and concrete are hotter than non-urban places, and retain heat longer, an effect referred to as Urban Heat Island. Populations with existing health concerns are more vulnerable to these conditions, but all residents will benefit from increased shade and access to drinking water in public spaces. Trees in urban settings help mitigate the urban heat island effect, and also offer aesthetic and environmental benefits along with shade.

Replacing concrete or asphalt with permeable pavement can also help cool urban areas, as can increasing an area's albedo. Light-colored rooftops and light colored pavement can help to cool urban spaces and buildings.

Action B: Encourage Shade Tree Planting in Public Works and in Commercial or Residential Plans or Areas

As described above, urban tree planting is a cross-cutting strategy: it helps to mitigate the urban heat island effect, provides environmental benefits and services, including wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration, and aesthetic benefits. Encouraging edible tree plantings would further food access goals. Attention should be paid to what sort of trees and other plantings are selected: are they drought tolerant? Are they susceptible to pests? Selecting species today that will tolerate tomorrow's potential climate will help North Adams continue to reap benefits of urban trees and plantings. When redeveloping or developing building sites, consider placing trees in areas that will provide shade through most of the day, reducing energy use and costs. Also, consider not just planting for shade but also for edibility, and promote edible landscaping where appropriate.

Action C: Develop a Cooling Center Network

An increased number of high heat days, and hotter, drier summers overall will be a challenge faced by all New England residents, but for those living in urban settings the issue will be exacerbated. The elderly, very young, and residents with heart or respiratory conditions are especially vulnerable to increased heat. Developing a heat shelter network ensures that all residents have access to space with air conditioning during periods of extreme heat. This could be implemented at the city scale, or through neighborhood groups. In the greater Boston region, communities advertise cooling centers through the news, and some, like Worcester, offer free rides to cooling centers for residents without transportation. A cooling center can be an existing community space, like a library or senior center, or can be a space specifically created or adapted to meet need, like a gym/auditorium or tented area.

Action D: Develop a Vulnerable Populations Phone Tree

As the population grows older, there will be more residents living alone in older homes or apartment settings. Checking in on vulnerable residents can help build community while also identifying issues before a resident is too hurt or sick to seek help. This could be implemented at the city scale, or through neighborhood groups.

Policy IS 2.2: Work to reduce impacts caused by hydrologic extremes from increased intensity and frequency of storm events to periods of drought.

Action A: Green Roofs

Support assessment and implementation of green roofs in the commercial areas of North Adams. Green roofs provide cross-cutting benefits in urban areas, and can be as straightforward as a few inch groundcover, or as complex as a designed park. Benefits of green roofs include: reduced energy use, as the vegetation insulates the roof during cold periods and cools it during hot periods; reduced and slowed stormwater runoff, and water filtration. Green roofs are good for the environment and good for human health, and can be encouraged or incentivized through zoning and development regulation.



Two examples of green roofs in Massachusetts communities: An 'intensive' roof growing flowering plants and shrubs, including blueberry plants, on the right, at the Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility. An 'extensive' system, with different varieties of low growing, drought-tolerant plants, on the left, at a senior housing complex in Ipswich.

Source: Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility, Mass. DCR.

Action B: Rainwater Harvesting

Support rainwater harvesting through municipal and residential programs. Rainwater harvesting captures water run-off, storing it for non-potable uses such as lawn and garden watering. It helps to reduce demand on public water supplies by using rainwater. A rainwater harvesting system can fit many scales, including small residential rain barrels or large-capacity underground storage tanks. The City could work with local or regional nurseries, hardware or home/yard supply stores to offer education and discounts to residents interested in installing a rainwater harvesting system. In

Hamilton (Massachusetts), a 200-gallon system was installed at an elementary school, where the rainwater served a butterfly and vegetable garden, and teachers developed specific curriculum around the rainwater system.

Action C: Increase Capacity of Bridges and Culverts

Proactively plan culverts, roads and bridges in response to current and anticipated impacts from climate change. In a meeting with public safety and municipal service officials, nine areas within the city were identified to have flooding and drainage issues, with one area specifically noted for storm flooding. These include areas along Massachusetts Avenue, Catherine Street, near Hillside Cemetery, Lyman Street, wetland areas to the east of Route 8 and along the river, and Beaver Street.

GOAL IS 3: ENSURE THAT NORTH ADAMS' PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES MEET CURRENT NEEDS AND RECEIVE THE MAINTENANCE REQUIRED TO PRESERVE THEIR FUNCTIONALITY AND VALUE TO THE CITY

Policy IS 3.1 Promote innovative practices in facility management and maintenance, paying special attention to practices that are good for human health and environmental quality.

Action A: Public Building and facility Assessment Framework

Develop a framework for the assessment of public buildings and facilities and link this to an annually updated report with applicable funding sources. Annually inspect City managed buildings and facilities, documenting maintenance and repair needs with a proposed time line for completion. This will help the City pro-actively maintain assets and avoid big fixes where possible through smaller maintenance or repair efforts.

Action B: Consider Adopting a Comprehensive Environmental Management Strategy for all City Facilities

Identify opportunities to increase energy efficiency of City facilities, and integrate environmentally sensitive landscape design into building areas. The City of Lowell, for example, designed their Regional Wastewater Utility to be an example of green design.

Action C: Streamline Maintenance of Buildings and Grounds Across City Departments

Where possible, consolidate or streamline the maintenance of buildings and grounds in such a way as to increase efficiencies in time and cost.

INFRASTRUCTURE- AND SERVICE-SPECIFIC GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- A. Energy
- B. Water and Sewer
- C. Roads and Bridges
- D. Schools and Education
- E. Public Safety
- F. Technology

A. Energy

GOAL IS 4: BUILD A RESILIENT CITY BY PROACTIVELY WORKING TO SET AND ADVANCE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION BEST PRACTICE

Policy IS 4.1: Endorse Sustainable Berkshires Climate and Energy Element and work to implement its contents at the municipal level.

Action A: Endorse Regional Climate and Energy Element

A key component of the strategy is to set a regional climate emissions reduction target that mirrors that set by the state. The element also sets forth a number of policies on climate adaptation strategies to reduce impacts on the city and region from climate change.

Action B: Adopt Berkshire Climate Resolution

Participate in the drafting and adoption of a climate resolution for regional municipalities and any tracking and reporting discussions that result as it is implemented or pursued.

Action C: Track Emission Reductions

The state has set up Mass Energy Insight, a free online tracking tool of metered utility accounts as a tool for communities implementing the Green Communities Act and pursuing Green Communities designation. This tool is available for all municipalities and special districts and could be used to track emission reductions of the City.

Action D: Highlight Climate Reduction Best Practices and Opportunities in North Adams

As success stories emerge, the City should work to report them as they relate to citizen involvement, cost savings for residents, fiscal efficiency and municipal operations leadership, and the like as a result of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. This can also be integrated into the City's rebranding message.

Action E: Create a North Adams Energy Committee

Municipal energy or green committees take the lead role in implementing projects and programs in a wide variety of green living topics including solar incentives, municipal energy projects, energy efficiency, water efficiency, and solid waste reduction. The City does not currently have a green committee, but could begin one, perhaps in partnership with MCLA where class projects and guest speakers could help advance thinking and practice while also enhancing the educational experience for students.



The capped landfill will soon be home to a new solar array.

Policy IS 4.2: Create a policy and incentive environment that is supportive of renewable energy project implementation.

Action A: Continue to Pursue Green Communities Designation

The City began the process of exploring interest and logistics of achieving Green Communities designation. Due to staffing turnover and need to further explore and deliberate the desirability of certain criteria, this process was put on hold for the time being. At the time, the program was new and there is now more guidance and case study evidence from communities on the pros and cons of participating. The City should revisit the topic and determine a course for moving forward. For example, even if the City does not want to pursue all five criteria, some of those five may be of interest and value for the City to implement regardless of a desire to pursue designation. If the City does continue to pursue the designation, it would be eligible for State funding made available every six months.

Action B: Renewable Energy Bylaws

Ensure that North Adams has municipal regulations in place to be prepared for renewable energy project proposals and control potential impacts from projects.

Action C: Provide Residential Solar Incentives

Explore Solarize Mass or other partnerships to provide incentives for residential or commercial solar projects. Pittsfield and Lenox currently participate in this program.

Policy IS 4.3: Continue to improve the City's renewable energy portfolio.

Action A: Green Energy Mix Through Group Purchasing

One way the City can green its energy immediately is through negotiating the composition of energy being served to the City by the electric company. Power purchase agreements, whether as a single city or as a collaborative of municipalities, allow a municipality to negotiate a fixed price but also to

negotiate the mix to help raise demand for renewable energy. While results of the former have been mixed as they depend on market fluctuations in the cost of energy, the latter use has solid merit and has gained traction as the primary reason to engage in such contracts, at least given recent energy cost trends which have been lower than projected. This picture may also change. The Town of Lanesborough has started to do this in pursuit of cost savings.

Action B: Lead by Example

North Adams is pursuing solar projects at the airport and/or land fill, and also would like to install solar at the wastewater treatment plan in the long run. North Adams has rooftop and ground mounted solar capacity. GIS analysis indicates greater capacity toward the western edge of the city, within the Route 8 corridor. There is also capacity toward the eastern end of the City. Residential and commercial rooftop potential is dispersed throughout the City, although commercial buildings have greater roof area than smaller residential units. See Map 10 in Appendix C.

Action C: Continue to Pursue Hydroelectric Feasibility

There are seven dams in North Adams with potential for hydroelectric energy. The Eclipse Mill dam has been specifically noted by the City for its high power potential. In the 1980s, the City completed a feasibility study and had developers interested in a hydroelectric energy project, but the cost was then too high. The State has made dam and seawall restoration available through a loan program. North Adams should continue to explore the possibility, and continue to explore funding programs. The City should work with the State to assess these dams and identify a pilot project. See Map 11 in Appendix C.

Action D: Conduct Wind Power Feasibility Study

The city does have wind potential, with two areas identified with a GIS analysis. The first area is along West Mountain Road, accessible via Reservoir Road and just over the Adams/North Adams line, while a smaller area is east of South Church Street, below the Mohawk Trail and adjacent to the Savoy Mountain State Forest. See Map 11 in Appendix C.

Action E: Track Emerging Technologies and Grant Programs

Stay up to date on emerging technologies and promising opportunities for clean, renewable energy generation and evaluate their utility and potential in helping to achieve larger climate and energy goals of the city as well as cost savings or revenue generation.

Policy IS 4.4: Maximize use of existing energy efficiency and conservation programs through marketing and promotion of available options.

Action A: Implement Energy Efficiency In Municipal Buildings

The City should maximize energy efficiency improvements in its buildings and operations to help save money while also helping the environment.

Action B: Promote Available Efficiency Programs

There are numerous energy efficiency programs available to residential and commercial properties that are undersubscribed. The city should work with neighborhood and business groups to promote these programs to help save money and the environment.

Action C: Promote Water Conservation Through Low Flow Appliances

The City has noted reduction in water use through a reduction in water fees received. It would like to maintain this trend. Low-flow fixtures and water efficient appliances help save water at the building level, and should be encouraged in residential homes and apartments as well as institutional or commercial buildings. Examples include: aerators for faucets and showers, ultralow flow toilets, and leak detection systems. Communities in the Ipswich River watershed have offered rebate and discount programs to encourage water-efficient appliances, providing rebates for clothes washers, dishwashers, refrigerators and air conditioners. Such rebate programs can be offered through appliance companies or through the City. The program in Ipswich was managed through EnergyStar and the utility department.

B. Water and Sewer

GOAL IS 5: MAINTAIN ADEQUATE WATER, WASTEWATER AND STORMWATER FACILITIES AND SUBSURFACE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Policy IS 5.1: Implement and maintain an up-to-date water Capital Improvement Plan.

Action A: Expand Long-Term (20 year) Water Study Into Full Capital Improvement Plan

The City has developed a detailed 20 year improvement plan for its drinking water system. The City should adopt this plan and begin to identify implementation items.

Action B: Enterprise Fund

Adopt an enterprise fund for water and sewer services to help fund maintenance and repairs on water and sewer infrastructure.

Action C: Explore Sustainable Infrastructure Alternatives

A number of cities facing high infrastructure upgrade and maintenance costs have been experimenting with green or sustainable infrastructure as a means of lower-cost improvements that reduce or eliminate the need for traditional approaches and associated costs.

Policy IS 5.2: Provide high quality municipal infrastructure and utility services.

Action A: Maintain, Upgrade and Improve Wastewater Collection System

Continue to implement programs to upgrade the wastewater collection system to mitigate existing deficiencies and accommodate the needs of the region in the present and into the future.

Action B: National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) Compliance

Make the necessary improvements to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permit requirements as determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This program controls water pollution by regulating point sources such as pipes or man-made ditches that discharge pollutants into water. Industrial, municipal and other facilities with discharge going directly to surface waters must obtain a permit.

Action C: Water Supply to Meet Current and Future Needs

Maintain adequate water supply, storage facilities, and delivery system to serve the needs of existing and future residents and businesses. Track population and use projections to ensure adequate supply and retain surface water (reservoir) and associated watershed lands to ensure supply into the future as an added insurance against climate or pollution risks. Install contemporary water meter in all residences in North Adams, to add efficiency to tracking water use.



Two examples of green infrastructure at UMass-Amherst: On the left, a bioretention swale catches storm water and slows it down, allowing it to cool and percolate into the ground instead of flowing quickly, full of sediment, into the Mill River and its wetlands. On the right, a rain garden on the UMass-Amherst campus provides a beautiful space to relax while providing water slowing and filtering services. A parking lot in Wilmington (MA) uses permeable pavement and a swale to reduce water runoff at a lake-side recreation area.

Policy IS 5.3: Manage stormwater to minimize flood hazards and protect water quality by employing watershed-based approaches that balance environmental, economic and engineering considerations.

Action A: Understand the Stormwater System and its Performance

Digitize stormwater system documentation for use in maps and analysis.

Action B: Maintain Drainage

Ensure that the city's drainage systems are adequately maintained.

Action C: Reduce Stormwater Runoff and Protect Water Quality Within North Adams

Pursue a range of approaches to reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality including during peak flow events. Encourage these tools at all levels: residential neighborhoods, institutional campuses and public spaces. For residential applications, the University of Massachusetts Extension provides information regarding how to site a rain garden, size considerations and suitable plantings. Consider such applications as: Rain gardens, bioretention cells or swales, permeable pavement. These different types of green infrastructure can be encouraged or incentivized through zoning and development regulations.



Improving access to the river (foreground) and eventual removal of the Route 2 overpass (background) to reroute traffic back through downtown are two significant infrastructure objectives.

C. Roads and Bridges

GOAL IS 6: CONTINUE TO PROMOTE A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT AFFORDS MOBILITY FOR ALL AND PROVIDES APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, SERVICES AND RECREATION AREAS.

Policy IS 6.1: Advocate for priority transportation infrastructure needs of the city in regional investment and planning decisions.

Action A: Maintain a Map of Roadway Conditions

The city should maintain a map of roadway conditions in GIS that allows the city to analyze and prioritize improvements, including how those improvements could be packaged with other subsurface infrastructure needs. This will also enable the city to quickly respond and advocate its needs in special grants as well as the annual transportation improvement program process.

Action B: Ensure City Transportation Priorities Are Well Represented on Regional Project Lists

Continue North Adams' presence on the regional MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and develop a municipal list of priority projects eligible for MPO funds for which to advocate in that venue.

Action C: Address Challenges Posed by Route 2 Design and Overpass

Route 2, particularly the overpass, pose a number of access, livability, and multi-modal safety barriers to fostering a people-oriented downtown and supporting economic activity for small businesses. During the planning process, this issue was repeatedly raised and recognized; however, it was considered a longer-term item given the high cost of removing the overpass and relative newness of the roadway. It is not impossible: Buffalo, New York is currently working to remove the "skyway" and rebuild an Olmsted park that had been removed for road construction decades ago. Consider the re-integration of Route 2 into the downtown, perhaps also allowing additional development in that area more reminiscent of the downtown prior to urban renewal demolitions. As road and bridge projects move forward and major investments are planned that include Route 2, a reconstruction should be considered instead of a simple maintenance of the roadway as it is currently built. The City owns this bridge, and will need to pursue state or federal funding to address challenges.

Policy IS 6.2: Implement multi-modal improvements and maintenance for a well connected, safe year-round system.

Action A: Promote Broader Use of Transit in the City

Promote expanded public transportation options and ridership campaigns. Ensure that existing and future employment, commercial and service centers, and housing concentrations are adequately served by public transit.

Action B: Use Incremental Maintenance Process to Implement Multi-modal Streets

Encourage projects, designs and initiatives that promote a shared, safe transportation system for bicyclists, motorists, transit users and pedestrians. Work with MassDOT's GreenDOT initiative, and consider pursuing programs such as Safe Routes to School and working with Mass in Motion to identify and offer multi-modal incentives for things like ride sharing and biking.

Action C: Improve Vehicular Routes and Alignments

The city's roadways, due to the Route 2 overpass and other major changes, contain multiple issues for cars, trucks and buses following intended routes. Inventory these problems, conduct a traffic study and define and implement remedies to traffic flow and safety problem spots. There are also intersections with no signage, which can be confusing to new residents or visitors from out of town. Seek to clearly mark and sign all intersections.

Action D: Identify and Address Areas of Congestion, Chronic Speeding, and Accidents

During the neighborhood meetings, residents pointed to a number of areas where speeding, poor signage, and congestion from on-street parking caused mobility and safety concerns. The city should build on these conversations and work interdepartmentally with property owners and neighborhood groups to implement changes and improvements such as traffic signs, conversion of certain streets to one-ways, stronger enforcement, and addressing multi-family parking needs in high-density areas.

Action E: Identify Priority Areas for Enforced Snow Clearing or Removal

Work with neighborhood associations and businesses to communicate about snow removal requirements and enforce those requirements. The city should also review its role as a snow-removal entity along major roadways to ensure there are not problem spots and whether there are additional areas that should be included in its route. Conversations and enforcement should be age- and ability-aware to ensure there are not outstanding reasons for non-compliance. Work with neighborhood and community groups to assess alternate compliance methods. Consider enforcement regimes with commercial establishments, and include areas around schools and transit stops priority for early snow removal.

Action F: Consider Possibility of Returned Passenger Rail Service to North Adams or the Northern Berkshires

While the City is pursuing efforts to introduce a scenic railway experience between North Adams and Adams, it also has rail tracks used for freight transport. It should consider future use of these tracks for passenger rail service. In the mean time, the City could support the proposed return of passenger rail service from Danbury, Connecticut to Pittsfield, Massachusetts and explore ways it could benefit from this.

Action G: Continue to Promote the Airport as an Asset for Economic Development and Recreation

The airport is an asset for the city of North Adams, and we should continue to pursue funding opportunities for maintenance and enhancements as necessary. The state currently provides funding for municipal airports, including for terminal buildings. In the past, the airport has been a hub for recreational use such as gliding. The Pittsfield airport has undergone substantial infrastructural improvements to improve safety and enhance its use commercially.



The city is fortunate to have McCann Technical School, an important regional asset for workforce development.

D. Schools and Education

GOAL IS 7: PROVIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT OFFER A HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL NORTH ADAMS' CHILDREN AND ADEQUATE SCHOOL FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO SERVE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Policy IS 7.1: Proactively work with the school departments and school boards to better utilize resources, including infrastructure, in a cost effective manner.

Action A: Hold regular working group meetings with school department, school board and municipal officials

Hold a summit for school departments, school boards and municipal officials and establish a mechanism for regular dialogue. School budgets are a significant component of municipal budgets often approaching or exceeding 50% of the total budget. However, there is no forum for regular dialogue between municipal officials and schools boards or departments at a municipal or regional level. A forum for regular dialogue would enable municipal officials and school departments to identify common issues and objectives and seek collaborative solutions.

Policy IS 7.2: Monitor and forecast school service demand based upon actual and predicted population demographics.

Action A: Participate in the development of, and share demographic information about, population projections

Nearly all of the communities in Berkshire County are experiencing population loss. Many communities are already grappling with low student enrollment and rising education costs. Working constructively to develop and share data is an important first step toward identifying potential problems and viable solutions that work toward the best interests of the majority.

Action B: Explore creative alternatives to meet the changing needs of the region

Explore creative alternatives for providing adequate school infrastructure to meet the changing needs of the city. There is a cost associated with the operation and maintenance of school buildings, along with salaries, health insurance, desks, supplies, etc. With reductions in state aid and declining student enrollment creative alternatives need to be considered to ensure that the needs of the students and the community are met without resulting in a fiscal burden. Creative alternatives may include sources of grant funding, grant application across school districts, shared resources, equipment or technology, and shared use of school buildings for compatible uses where allowed by state law.



The City employs one of the only professional (versus volunteer) fire departments in the county.

E. Public Safety

GOAL IS 8: ENSURE THAT NORTH ADAMS HAS THE NECESSARY SERVICES, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND MANPOWER REQUIRED TO PROVIDE FOR ALL PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY NEEDS.

Policy IS 8.1: Ensure adequate staffing and facilities to enable public safety services to perform their duties with excellence.

Action A: Complete a Public Safety Facility Study

Complete a study to determine true extent of needed renovations or construction of a new facility. The existing public safety facility has ADA issues. Future efforts should include identifying suitable locations for a public safety facility.

Action B: Replace Aging Cruisers and Fire Apparatus

Existing pumper/engines for the fire department are from 1987 and 1989.

Action C: Interdepartmental Collaboration for Proactive Safe Design in City Projects

As infrastructure and facility projects move forward, departments should include public safety officials to identify hazards in infrastructure or development projects to ensure new problems are not created or an opportunity to eliminate a safety or access problem is missed because of a lack of communication.

Action D: Maintain Mutual Aid or Mutual Assistance Agreements

Maintain mutual aid or mutual assistance agreements with local fire departments to ensure an adequate response in the event of a major fire, fire in areas with limited capacity, or other emergencies.

Action E: Expand the Mutual Aid Model

Expand the mutual aid model to create efficiencies through the use of shared equipment whenever possible without compromising public safety.

Action F: Support Training Costs

The City has identified the need for a Public Safety training facility/program, as many of the training opportunities are far away. This should be included in the Public Safety Facility Study.

Action F: Support Funding for a Public Safety Vehicle Maintenance Program

Create a program and hire or contract out repair and maintenance of all Public Safety vehicles by certified emergency vehicle technicians.

Policy IS 8.2: Take actions and implement programs to support neighborhood and community crime and safety needs.

Action A: Identify Priority Areas for Police Substations

At a series of neighborhood workshops, North Adams residents identified a desire to see enhanced police presence to help prevent crime. Longtime residents noted that neighborhood substations were community assets.

Action B: Identify Priority Areas for Foot or Bicycle Patrols

Neighborhood residents also noted the usefulness of foot or bicycle patrols to ensure police presence and engagement in priority neighborhood areas.

Action C: Identify Locations for Community Policing Programs

Neighborhood residents and the City have noted a need for strengthened relationships between city residents (especially youth) and law enforcement. One suggestion included having officers hold “office hours” in schools or community centers – maintaining an engaged presence while conducting non-patrol work.

Action D: Advocate for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment

Local treatment options for mental health and addiction are limited and yet drug and alcohol use is frequently cited as a major contributing factor to violent crime incidents and property crime events. Continue to advocate for resources to support long-term, intensive mental health care as well as preventative strategies as a form of crime prevention.

Action E: Increase Funding for Evidence-based Crime Prevention Programs

Continue to identify new sources of revenue and support for preventative programs, including the potential of public-private partnerships and youth-based initiatives.

See also Housing and Neighborhoods Chapter.



The concrete flood chutes, while not ideal from a visual or environmental perspective, were put to a full test during Hurricane Irene.

GOAL IS 9: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Policy IS 9.1: Encourage proactive planning within North Adams to reduce the loss of life, property, infrastructure, environmental and cultural resources from natural disasters.

Action A: Develop and maintain up-to-date Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans

All communities should have up-to-date Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans on file with Massachusetts Emergency Management.

Action B: Encourage broader participation in Code RED system

North Adams already participates in the Code RED system, but broader participation is desired. Outreach to recruit additional residents into the system could be conducted at the City level as well as at the neighborhood group level. Outreach to vulnerable populations, such as elderly residents living alone, should be prioritized.

Action C: Citywide Disaster Awareness Campaign

Make sure that all North Adams residents are familiar with municipal disaster plans as well as steps individual homes and businesses should take independently to promote their own safety and readiness.

Action D: Coordinate Disaster Planning Between City and Major Employers

Continue to work with North Adams institutions, including area health care providers and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Art to develop disaster plans.

F. TECHNOLOGY

GOAL IS 10: INVEST IN STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY AND RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF FIBER NETWORKS TO BETTER SERVE THE COMMUNITY.

Policy IS 10.1: Continue to improve, expand and maintain state of the art technology equipment.

Action A: Expand City Municipal Fiber Network

Integrate fiber network expansion with other infrastructure projects to cost effectively plan for future fiber network to homes, businesses and local government.

Action B: Increase Capacity for Next-Generation Broadband Connectivity

While recognizing that future emerging technology is challenging, it is critical that planning exists to ensure that capability exists for increased broadband connectivity speeds.

Action C: Adopt Phased Funding Approach to Maintain and Upgrade Technology Equipment

A phased approach to stay ahead of the curve with state of the art technology equipment will ensure that funding is available for regularly scheduled future technology equipment upgrades and improvements.

GOAL IS 11: IMPROVE CITIZEN ACCESS TO BROADBAND.

Policy IS 11.1: Expand and support community broadband access.

Action A: Increase Broadband Access

Partner with broadband provider companies to identify neighborhood-based low broadband usage areas and explore partnerships to provide low-cost or free broadband access.

Action B: Expand Current Public Wireless Broadband Access

Recognize current and future broadband expectations by providing city-wide wireless broadband access with initial focus on all city recreational areas, school campuses, police substations and their surrounding neighborhoods.

Action C: Improve and Support Public Computer Centers

Replace computers used by the public with state of the art equipment and adopt a replacement program to keep them up-to-date. Continue technical support to all city computer centers, including the North Adams Public Library and Council on Aging who provide free broadband access and technical education to our community.

GOAL IS 12: CREATE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT SERVICES USING TECHNOLOGY

Policy IS 12.1: Improve, Expand, Consolidate and Share Data Centers, Backups, Disaster Recovery and Technology Services

Action A: Develop a Consolidation Plan for City and School Data Centers

Consolidating all city and school computer servers into the city's fully virtualized data center is a cost effective measure that provides disaster recovery and a centralized backup system.

Action B: Identify and Inventory City and School Technology Equipment

Conduct an inventory of all city and school computer technology equipment and identify areas where duplication exists.

Action C: Centralized Mobile Applications

Continue to engage with other governmental entities to provide mobile applications with the flexibility to serve the residential and business needs of our community. The city's investment in mobile applications will strive to provide a central portal for all municipal needs while having the capability for seamless future expansion.

Action D: Expand City Voice and Fax over IP

Continue to expand the city Voice and Fax over IP solution which is a long term cost effective solution with the capability to accommodate future expansion to all city and school buildings.

Action E: Partner with Other Governmental Entities and Educational Institutions

Continue to explore partnerships with other governmental entities and educational institutions to better serve our community and local government.

Action F: Incorporate Cutting-Edge Emerging Technology

Incorporate cutting-edge mobile and social media technology to communicate reliable city public information. The goal is for information to be available anywhere, at any time, and include services such as distributing bills, receiving bill payments or soliciting resident concerns, etc.

Action G: Coordinate City-Wide Technology Purchases

Recognize technology investments made and coordinate future city-wide technology purchases to ensure that all equipment maintains a level of flexibility and interoperability to efficiently and economically handle the changing needs of technology.

Action H: Explore State-Wide Financial Software Solutions

Acquire a secure flexible centralized financial software solution that has the capability to handle all city and towns while allowing for autonomous reporting and analysis. The software modules would minimally include General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Purchase Orders and Payroll and have the flexibility to seamlessly integrate future applications.

Action I: Explore a State-Wide Centralized Mobile-Based Application for Bill Collections

Explore a centralized portal to handle all bill collections for every city and town in Massachusetts.

Action J: Implement Non-Cash Payment Methods

Implement the capability for non-cash payment methods using debit, credit cards and automatic bank account withdrawals.

Action K: Develop and Implement Geographical Information System (GIS) Strategic Plan

Recognize the importance of maintaining and improving the city's Geographical Information System (GIS) by developing a strategic plan for future investment. Continued development of the city's geospatial data and integration with the State of Massachusetts' Geographical Information System (GIS) data is an integral component for a successful Geographical Information System (GIS).

Action L: Replace Water Meters with Electronic Readers

Implement and fund the replacement of all water meters with automatic electronic meters that could be automatically read from vehicles that traverse the city on a daily basis.

Action M: Pursue Paperless Local Government

Identify areas where going paperless is cost effective and develop plans for replacement solutions.

Action N: Support Telecommunication Expansion

Continue to lobby for expanded and improved telecommunication to better serve our city.

Action O: Explore Centralized Retirement Board Administration

A centralized Retirement Board Administration computer system available to all retirement systems throughout the commonwealth is a cost effective solution for every city and town.

